

98TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

DATE: January 14, 2016

FROM: State Representative Adam Neylon **TO:** Assembly Committee on Education

RE: Supporting AB 665

Dear Members of the Committee:

At one time Wisconsin brewers bottled beer by hand, and auto workers assembled cars one piece at a time on Henry Ford's assembly lines. Both industries gave way to automation, and now machines handle much of the work more efficiently than humans. The fact is, 21st century manufacturing facilities have ushered a new wave of technologies like advanced robotics and fully integrated production systems.

I am here to testify in support of AB 665, legislation to create the Wisconsin Robotics League state grant program to authorize up to \$500,000 of funding to the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) to be disbursed to robotics teams throughout Wisconsin. It will allow a school sponsoring a robotics team to apply, through DPI, providing up to \$5,000 for allowable expenses: (competition fees, travel expenses, robotics kits, paying a mentor/coach of the team, and other related team expenses).

According to a 2015 report by Deloitte Consulting: over the next decade, nearly three and a half million manufacturing jobs will need to be filled and the skills gap is expected to result in 2 million of those jobs going unfilled. There are two major contributing factors to the widening gap – baby boomer retirements and economic expansion. An estimated 2.7 million jobs are likely to be needed as a result of retirements in the existing workforce, while 700,000 jobs are likely to be created due to natural business growth. In addition to retirements and economic expansion, other factors contribute to the shortage of skilled workforce, including loss of embedded knowledge due to movement of experienced workers, a negative image of the manufacturing industry among younger generations, lack of STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) skills among workers, and a gradual decline of technical education programs in public high schools.

Our students are up to the challenge of meeting tomorrow's workforce demands. I believe they deserve an opportunity to compete against the rest of the world and develop skills for the rest of their lives, while working together in a team-first environment.

Thank you for your support.